

MINUTES FOR NOVEMBER 4, 2010
MEETING OF THE PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Members Present: David Anspacher, MNCPPC; Ramin Assa; John Britton, Municipal League; Erwin Mack, Chair; Alan Migdall; Darrel Droblich; Steve Friedman; Al Roshdieh for Arthur Holmes, MCDOT Director; Colleen Mitchell; Alyce Ortuzar; Reemberto Rodriguez; Jack Strausman;

Members Absent: James D'Andrea, MCPS; Cpt. Thomas Didone, MCPD; Peter Moe, MSHA; Richard Romer representing Councilmember Ervin; David Sharp;

County Staff: Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, MCDOT; Will Haynes, MCDOT-DTEO; William Selby, MCDOT; Tom Pogue, MCDOT; Emil Wolanin, MCDOT-DTEO

Guests: Harry Thomas, Rockville City; Edna Miller, LWVMC Transportation Committee

Chairman Erwin Mack called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm,

1. Committee Business:

Mack introduced the draft meeting minutes from September 16. These were delayed due to the back-to-back CountyStat and County Council program reviews.

MOTION: Motion to accept the September 2010 minutes as drafted and presented was moved, seconded, and approved unanimously.

New PTSAC Member: The County Council approved Darrel Droblich as the newest member to the PTSAC, replacing Bill Bronrott. Originally from Michigan, Droblich has been in Washington DC for sixteen years, moving to Chevy Chase a year ago. Lives with his wife and two children, seven and eight. He has worked in Public Policy for 25 years, working for Senator Carl Levin, and for the last fifteen years with the National Sleep Foundation, focusing on public health and safety issues in the work place, and in traffic safety. Mack explained that we had a very good field of candidates this time, with five very qualified candidates being interviewed for the vacancy. Those who were not selected are encouraged to reapply at another time, and come and visit, attending the PTSAC meetings.

Tom Pogue announced the hiring of the new Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Coordinator, Nadji Kirby. Kirby has worked with Office of Community Partnerships, so she is very familiar with the County. Her first efforts were to get the SRTS Grant E application submitted to the State. Kirby will be at the January PTSAC Meeting; **Dunckel stated the SRTS Program would be on the agenda for January for a brief update on activities.**

CountyStat Program Review – October 12: Dunckel reviewed the handout of the CountyStat review. This is available online, both on the CountyStat site and the PTSAC webpage where the meeting packet is posted. While the total number of ped collisions did not go down in 2009, the County is encouraged by the early results of the traffic calming program and the safe routes to school program which have both demonstrated a reduction in pedestrian collisions within targeted locations following corrective actions being implemented. Many of the HIA projects, and other safety projects are just now being implemented on the street - - so the County is hopeful that the next several years could see a reduction in pedestrian collisions. Alan Migdall observed that the numbers are promising because it appears that the increase in pedestrian collisions is starting to decline - - indicating (being cautiously optimistic) that a downward trend could be possible in the future.

Discussion ensued on the origins and status of collision data, and what was captured in the reported numbers. If the

MCPD records an accident report, then the collision is in the database, and is entered in to the State-wide MAARS reporting system. Rockville accidents are included in the database; Takoma Park's are not. John Britton asked about why the HIA on Rockville Pike ended at Halpine and was not extended up to Edmonston where a recent pedestrian fatality occurred. Dunckel reviewed the HIA designation and how the areas were determined – using density of pedestrian collisions. Emil Wolanin provided an historical perspective to how HIAs have been selected to date. John Britton asked that the record show that he was requesting that the Rockville Pike HIA be extended up to Edmonston, as there have been additional concerns expressed about the number of pedestrian collisions, the location of bus stops, and the distance between crossing locations. Alyce Ortuzar asked about how cause of accidents is factored into the analysis; audits look at causation, as have previous CountyStat reviews. Ortuzar expressed concern over the sequencing of pedestrian crossing signals. **Britton asked if the issue could be taken up in a future presentation on the engineering and operations of pedestrian traffic signals.**

Mack noted that Rich Romer wanted the Committee to know how much Valerie Ervin appreciated the excellent presentation made to the County Council on October 21, and that it was now available for viewing on the County Council website. In addition, Mack announced that he had received a request to bring an issue before the Committee just this afternoon (letter from the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board—see section 5 below), but that he would not introduce it to the Committee on such short notice - - that it would be introduced for the next meeting. Mack reiterated the goal of not introducing anything new to the Committee for a meeting less than one week ahead of the meeting date.

2. County Council Presentation on Pedestrian Safety Program:

Mack Introduced Emil Wolanin to go over what had been discussed at the County Council Presentation on October 21. Mack reported that the presentation with questions and answers took 2 hours and that the Councilmembers' compliments were profuse. Emil proceeded to review the PowerPoint presentation made to the County Council. Captain Tom Didone, who with Wolanin made the presentation to Council, was not able to be at tonight's meeting.

Questions were taken by Wolanin:

Q: Darrel Droblich asked about the analysis of cost-benefit - - where does the County get the biggest bang for the buck. A: The County has not performed cost benefit, but relies on the experience of its traffic engineers to determine what has the greatest chance of success, with reports from citizens and communities that the measures are working once implemented. Wolanin's staff pulls from the practices of others to determine what is cost effective and successful.

Q: How does the County interact with PEPCO? A: The County is now coordinating closely with PEPCO on ADA issues and needs to improve lighting in HIAs.

Q: Ramin Assa asked about research into new and innovative features, similar to what was presented to the PTSAC last Spring - - is the County testing out new techniques and technologies? A: The County is not a research organization - - but learns from research performed by others.

Q: John Britton asked if the County has satisfied all the needs identified in the SRTS analysis of needed safety improvements. A: The County still has schools to address - - after bringing the existing schools up to an acceptable standard, further improvements that could be made will be evaluated. Over two hundred schools need improvements; while the County originally intended to improve 30 each year, only 50 total schools have been addressed to date.

Q: Steve Friedman asked if use by bicycles influenced which traffic calming measures were selected for use. A: The County is trying to do a better job of incorporating bicycle needs into the traffic calming measures.

Q: Friedman suggested that bicycle features could actually be considered as a traffic calming feature: sharrows, contra-flow lanes, etc. - - serving as lane reduction strategies. A: As repaving is now done in the County, opportunities to reconfigure the road sections to accommodate bicycles and traffic calming features are being evaluated.

Q: Alyce Ortuzar asked about other locations that are demonstrating things that work: Edmonston, Maryland

streetscape, Dan Burton walkable communities models - - including work on parking lots. Alan Migdall suggested adding design features as potential contributing factors for pedestrian collisions. A: Wolanin responded that this is difficult to determine from accident reports.

3. Pedestrian Safety Budget – FY12:

Al Roshdieh introduced the topic, highlighting the documents that had been distributed to the PTSAC. Roshdieh cautioned the Committee that budget forecasts do not look good for FY12; last year the department's budget was cut 23% (reduction of \$11 million.) In his twenty years in the County, Roshdieh has never seen such a severe budget reduction. Tuesday's election that defeated the Ambulance Fee will further exacerbate an already bad budget situation. An additional \$3 million is being reduced from this year's MCDOT budget as a result of this loss of Ambulance Fee revenue. An additional 10% or 15% reduction is now expected for next year (FY12).

Roshdieh explained that what is needed from the group is not a ranking of priorities, but rather feedback on those areas the PTSAC feel MCDOT should be concentrating on in improving pedestrian safety. Roshdieh has asked all of the MCDOT Division Chiefs to submit a 15% reduction estimate for next year; what would each Division Chief cut if they had to reduce their operation by 15%. Bill Selby added that it is highly unlikely there will be any additional monies for any new pedestrian safety program components next year; the group's focus is more appropriately on what are the areas the County really needs to hang on to.

Roshdieh listed the following as identified needs and asked that the PTSAC members respond as to their beliefs of priorities no matter what the future budget might be:

Current Initiatives

1. New Sidewalk and Bikeway Construction
2. *Safe Routes to School (SRTS)*
3. *Traffic Calming*
4. HIAs: Targeted Engineering, Education, Enforcement
5. *Speed & Red Light Camera Programs*
6. Assessment and Upgrades of Pedestrian Signals
7. New Streetlight Projects (CBD Upgrades and In-fill/small scale)
8. Additional and Upgraded Crosswalks

Note: Italicized programs currently have data documenting success of programs reducing collisions.

Colleen Mitchell agreed with the top five priorities, and supported the highlighting of those activities that have demonstrated success. Safety is the top priority. Item 1 (New Sidewalks) is less clear what that priority is. David Anspacher stated that items 2 (SRTS,) 3 (Traffic Calming,) and 5 (Speed and Red Light Cameras) are priorities, and though item 4 (HIAs) is too early to tell, it holds that it is important for safety because it is focused on where the most crashes are occurring. He questioned whether item 1 (New Sidewalks) or item 8 (additional and upgraded crosswalks) were priorities given the current budget shortfall, with sidewalks and crosswalks being addressed under other components of the Pedestrian Safety Program. Roshdieh responded that sidewalks are important, though it is harder to quantify the benefit.

Ortuzar felt strongly that sidewalks were an absolute safety need – without sidewalks, people don't walk because they have nowhere safe to walk. Jack Strausman agreed that there were so many locations in the County where there were gaps in sidewalks, or no sidewalks at all - - that these needed to be filled in so that people can safely walk rather than drive everywhere. Ortuzar was concerned about item 6 (Assessment and Upgrades of Pedestrian Signals) - - that it be funded unless it is being addressed under other items that do receive funding (i.e. item 4, HIAs.) Friedman suggested that "high impact" roadways with multiple users competing for space should be the locations where sidewalk

construction is prioritized. Drobnich asked about the inventory of sidewalks needed; Dunckel explained the history of the sidewalk program being reactive, the failed attempt to develop a County-wide sidewalk inventory to define where the need is most acute; and the current proposal to target a specific area to develop a list of areas where sidewalks are most needed. Drobnich suggested that items that are revenue generators (i.e. speed and red light cameras) should be expanded to generate revenue for the other components. If something has to be cut, Drobnich would favor cutting education and preserving engineering and enforcement activities. Much discussion ensued on the issue of speed cameras, how that program (Safe Speed administered by MCPD) is being implemented and what the money could and should be used for. Dunckel requested that the Speed Camera Program be discussed at a later date, when MCPD is at the meeting.

Mitchell requested that when a sidewalk need assessment is performed, that a series of critical criteria are defined and prioritized so that the most critical sidewalk needs are addressed first. Peoples' requests for sidewalk should be filtered by need – where safety issues are most important. The inventory/assessment needs to define these criteria. Given that we may not have funding to build all the sidewalks wanted, the most critical needs should be built first. Migdall suggested that since all of the current initiative components had been determined to be important program needs, each component should be examined as to where the biggest bang for the buck is achieved - - not necessarily eliminating any one component, but funding the most effective elements within each component.

Anspacher reiterated that Components 2, 3, 4, and 5 needed to be preserved, but that the County could no longer afford to only build sidewalks where citizens “cried the loudest.” CIP sidewalk projects will continue to be built. Roshdieh explained that while MCDOT currently builds sidewalks requested by communities, that the need for sidewalks is an important part of the evaluation of what gets built. Pedestrian safety is an important criteria for building sidewalks.

Roshdieh thanked the PTSAC for their input; he said the ideas expressed would be very helpful to the department as the budget process gets underway. The “MARC” (Maximum Agency Request Ceiling) for the FY12 budget is expected in the coming weeks. When it is provided, MCDOT will then know what money will be available for the Pedestrian Safety Program.

4. Subcommittee Reports, Updates, and Recommendations:

Sidewalks-Pedestrian Network – Ramin Assa and Alan Migdall: Assa and Dunckel are working on setting up meetings with different groups to get the sidewalk subcommittee work underway. Migdall introduced his motion that the County perform an inventory of pedestrian networks to enable the County to identify where safety improvements are most needed, as first proposed in the County Executive’s Pedestrian Safety Initiative.

MOTION: The Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee strongly encourages the Montgomery County Department of Transportation to conduct, as a pilot, a targeted assessment of pedestrian pathways within a specific location where pedestrian and bicycle demand is high. This assessment should be integrated into the County’s GIS. This assessment should be analyzed and evaluated, *with safety as a priority*, to define where deficiencies occur and where pathways and crossing locations, etc., need to be improved. The results of this assessment and analysis should be evaluated for broader application across the County in the future.

Action: The motion was seconded by Assa. The motion passed, as amended (in italics; see discussion below), with seven votes approving and two votes opposing the motion.

Britton, given the just concluded discussion of budget priorities, and given this was not even discussed as a budget item, asked where this fits into our constrained financing. Dunckel explained the history of asking for this assessment

three years ago, when the cost for a County-wide assessment was estimated by consultants to be just under \$1 million. Per Peter Moe's suggestion in recent meetings, the thought now was to do an assessment for a targeted, smaller area, with money currently budgeted in the Sidewalks program. Engineers had suggested that a smaller area or two could be assessed for under \$100,000. This could be done as a pilot. Anspacher expressed the importance of knowing what this assessment would be used for; too often the County studies things to no effect. It was suggested that improving safety be inserted as a criteria to evaluate in the assessment. Ortuzar disagreed because she felt improving safety was inherent in all sidewalks; Mitchell countered that some priority locations are more critical than others. The motion was amended to add safety as a priority to consider: **"This assessment should be analyzed and evaluated, with safety as a priority, to define where deficiencies occur and where pathways and crossing locations, etc., need to be improved."**

Bicycle Access and Safety - Peter Moe, Steve Friedman: Friedman said that after close consultation with legislators and the bicycling community, it was determined that it would be better to not advocate for any new initiatives this year; with so much being done last year, it would be better to let the new laws take effect and then evaluate what changes may be needed or are possible in another year.

Friedman introduced three new proposals for the PTSAC to consider: the first was ***"Capital Bike Sharing."*** Arlington and DC are currently moving forward with a successful bike sharing program, with over 1000 bikes available. If Montgomery County would join this effort, it would support the County's stated position that it is the Gateway to the Capital. A Bike Station is part of the new Silver Spring Transit Center, akin to what was constructed recently at Union Station.

MOTION: The PTSAC approve a request to the County Council and the County Executive for Montgomery County to participate in the Capital Bike sharing program starting with the establishment of three stations at Bethesda Metro, Silver Spring Metro, and Rockville Metro Stations.

The motion was seconded. Mitchell explained that, working for DC, she is involved with the planning for the entire program. She pointed out that the locations needed to be moving out from the urban core; and that the stations needed to be clustered in one general location, i.e. three in Silver Spring, or three in Bethesda. The system is based on creating connected, satellite/pods of stations for people to take and return bikes. The bike sharing needs to be in a general vicinity, rather than merely at a Metro Station. Britton explained that Montgomery County and Rockville had worked with COG in the preparation of a TIGER II grant application for the creation of the regional Bike Share program, and had been denied. Rockville is now working with Kaiser Permanente to expand the program into Rockville (\$1 million project.) Anspacher had helped prepare the TIGER grant application and been involved in conceptualizing the program for MNCPPC. They had proposed 25 bike sharing locations in Silver Spring and 25 in Bethesda; the proposal was for \$1.7 million.

Anspacher proposed amending the motion to state: "... starting with the establishment of bike sharing stations around the Silver Spring, Bethesda, and Rockville Metro Station areas in FY12."

Dunckel proposed deferring action on the motion until a future meeting when the County's key players involved with the bike sharing proposal could join us. There is a lot of energy and support for the concept - - the challenge now is how it can be paid for. Friedman thought that would be good, but that this highlighted the disconnect between the bicycling community and the regional transportation planners: few in the bicycle community realized all this work was being done to promote the program. Droblich asked that cost information be included in future discussions of the program.

Action: Friedman agreed to the tabling of the motion until a future meeting, and to work with Mitchell, Anspacher, and Britton to refine the proposed language for the motion. Dunckel agreed to invite the

appropriate people to the future meeting who have been involved in pushing the proposal forward.

Friedman introduced his second recommendation “*Study of Wisconsin Avenue Bike Lane.*”

MOTION: The PTSAC approve a request to the State Highway Administration to conduct a study and impact analysis of creating bike lanes on Wisconsin Avenue between Western Avenue and Bradley Boulevard to provide a “safe haven” for cyclists currently using Wisconsin Avenue between and beyond these points.

The motion was seconded. Anspacher opposed the creation of a center lane bike path, citing the Master Plan which calls for a shared use path on the east side of MD 355. Much discussion ensued on the concept of a bike lane on Wisconsin Avenue and how such a facility could be designed and constructed. Friedman pointed out that this facility would tie into the proposed Bradley Boulevard Bike Path now being designed by MCDOT. Pogue questioned whether it was appropriate for the committee to advocate for a specific project, since its charge was more global, encompassing the entire County. Further discussion ensued on what could/should be built on Wisconsin Avenue.

Action: Mack tabled the discussion, as the meeting had already run beyond its stated end time of 9:30 pm, and stated the proposal would be discussed at a future meeting, when it will be placed on the agenda – along with the third proposal: Bicycle Ride-along.

5.) New Business/Committee Comments:

The January Meeting will be held in the 9th Floor Conference Room of the EOB. Dunckel passed out the letter from the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board just received by the PTSAC today. This will be discussed at the next meeting. An invitation will be extended to the Western Montgomery County Citizens Advisory Board to meet with the PTSAC at the January 6 meeting, where the PTSAC will consider the letter. Ortuzar requested that sidewalk snow removal be placed on the agenda of the next meeting; she wants to discuss a better way to clear snow so that pedestrian pathways are cleared.

6.) Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 9:42 pm

Next Scheduled Meeting Date: January 6, 2011

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